

Participant- observation assignment



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The Attitude of People who Attended Samba walked into the 24-Hour Fitness gym for the first time, one Tuesday morning, to try the much raved-about Samba workout. I was late and class had already started. I walked into the brightly lit studio, on the second floor of the 24-Hour Fitness gym in Pearl City, and placed my bag with the rest of the bags along the wall without mirrors.

I looked around the room: mirrors completely covered the three other walls of the room, farthest from the door, the instructor that day, was in front with her back facing everyone and facing the mirror in front of her, pumping her fists and energetically exclaiming instructions to the class. And the class following along, some skillfully, some struggling to keep up. I fell in the “struggling-to-keep-up” group. It was an all-women’s class, with the exception of two middle-aged men. The other two times I came had similar turnouts.

The attire was similar all around: spandex, t-shirts, some wore sweatbands, girls had their hair tied back, workout shoes, and there was not a single jeans pants in the room. Fast-paced music started playing and, like all here times attended Samba class, the instructor took to the front and started leading the class. Immediately, hips were popping and swaying, feet were shuffling side to side and forward and backward, arms pumping up and down and criss-cross, to name a few moves. Basically, there was a lot of movement.

There were short breaks between each song, ensuring time to catch one’s breath but not enough to take a breather. After one routine came the next (a quick sip of water, maybe) and then it was on to the next three to four

minute set. The Instructors would skillfully eave their way around the room to make sure everyone would have a chance to see them. In two of my classes, one way the instructors would inspire more effort from us was by splitting the class down the middle and having each side facing the opposing side while doing the set (this was fun but pretty nerve-wracking for me).

There were different dance/workout moves for deferent genres of music: popping for hip hop music, shrugging for Plywood music, salsa-ins for Latin music, we even did Korean pop music’s “ Kananga Style” in one class!

Among those who attend Samba class, most, if not all, try their best. Samba is designed to be fast-paced, with constant movement for an hour. In all my classes, a good amount of attendees were grandmas and middle-aged women, but not once did I hear a complaint. Instead, between sets, with the little time given to rest, people were smiling and encouraging one another.

I was often a recipient of this encouragement, especially the third time I attended Samba class, whenever I was gasping for breath between sets, a middle-aged woman next to me would notice how tired I was and give me a smile of encouragement. Also, people were focused on following the instructor to correctly execute the dance OFF instructor put his/her right hand up, about 30-40 other right hands shot up. There were no malicious Jokes or disruptions, everyone was sincere and eager to have a good time. You could tell by the time Samba was finished that everyone worked hard by their sweat-soaked shirts and flushed faces.

In one of my classes, everyone worked so hard that by the time class was done, the mirrors were fogged up. Among those who attend Samba class,

most, if not all, enjoyed themselves. When asked why they liked Samba, here are some responses from a few attendees: “ For me, it helped me lose 40 pounds- at my own pace. It’s fun, you meet a lot of awesome people, and it’s a party-themed workout format,” it “ makes me feel comfortable that I can dance and exercise as freely as I want without anyone judging me,” “... It makes me happy and it’s super fun and you can dance and work out at the same time! ” With fast-paced music paired with popular dance moves, people are attracted to workout by “ partying. ” As the Samba website says, “ are you ready to party yourself into shape? ” I know I caught myself smiling and laughing at myself, more than once, trying to do the “ sexy’ dance moves. There were those who mastered the dance moves and were adding their own flair to the routine, which made it both inspiring and fun for the rest of the class to watch.

Unlike regular, individual workouts, since Samba is done in a large group with everyone doing the same routine, it’s easy to “ let loose” and (try to) dance with confidence. After class, there were always people talking to the instructor. Once, I even saw some people taking a picture with the instructor. Among those who attend Samba class, most, if not all, are sociable. If you come to a public, popular event, like Samba, then chances are you like people or at the very least, don’t mind being around them.

Attendees liked to come to Samba with friends and were quick to make new ones during class. I chatted with one of the people from Samba about the class and at the end of class we exchanged numbers. Smiles and words of encouragement were abundant in all three classes I attended. My experience of Samba was a positive one. Not only did I get a great workout, but I had a

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lot of fun doing it! My very first time going to Samba, I was nervous and stiff but after seeing everyone dancing and getting in tune with the music, I started exerting myself.

I don't have much experience with dancing but Samba made it fun and easy to learn. You can follow the instructor or, if you're in one of the back rows (like I was), follow someone, close to you, who knows what they're doing. I especially appreciated all the core exercises they incorporated into the workouts. I always felt like I got the best workout after doing those. After all my classes, my shirt would be soaked through with sweat. Even though I went by myself, it was easy to feel comfortable and like a part of the group. The classes were mixed with both regulars and first-timers.

I really liked how everyone was friendly and interacted with one another. I think the next time I go, I would take a friend or two with me. The one and only thing that discourages me from going is the price of membership at 24 Hour Fitness. If it wasn't for that, I'd probably go every week. I really enjoyed this assignment and would not mind doing it again. In the short time that I took classes, Samba has taught me to not care about what I may look like to other people and just do my best, regardless, because that's what everyone else is trying to do.